REPORT OF NI MEDICAL ACADEMIC STAFF COMMITTEE (NIMASC) TO MASC UK (JULY 2015)

Meeting with Queen’s University (QUB)
NIMASC chair has written to Professor Elborn, Dean, School of Medicine, Dentistry and Biomedical Sciences, QUB, seeking to re-introduce the regular update meetings previously held with his predecessor Professor Johnston.

Members of NIMASC attended a QUB all staff meeting on 18 May called by Professor Elborn and covering the topics of “Vision 2020” and the new voluntary severance scheme at QUB.

As part of the priority areas for growth identified as part of Vision 2020, QUB has plans to increase research income from £55m to £110m, increase the postgraduate profile from 23% to 30% and increase the number of international students from 8% to 20%.

Academic Standards at QUB
NIMASC has been made aware of issues involving changes to performance criteria for academic staff when passing probation, applying for promotion and for the REF.

UCU have not been formally consulted on these changes despite having asked for more information and NIMASC will be meeting with UCU to follow up on this.

The announcement from DEL of a reduction of about £8.6m in the recurrent grant funding to QUB for teaching and research for also raised.

NIMASC continues to have concerns about the different “titles” applied to academics in Northern Ireland and how these have changed and are continuing to change. The concern is that eventually Northern Ireland would become out of “keeping” with the other nations. There needs to be greater clarity, standardisation and normalisation of clinical academic titles across the UK. This will be raised at the meeting with Professor Elborn.

Supplement for undergraduate medical and dental education (SUMDE) / GP training development
A proposal has been developed to extend a pilot programme of a GP placement week within the fifth year assistantship from 50 students to all fifth year students, the SUMDE Office has now costed this proposal. This programme contributes to the much needed development of placements in Primary Care.

Communications
NIMASC are in the process of finalising an electronic newsletter to be sent out to academics in NI and it will include web hosted content, including links to BMA communities giving members the opportunity to commenten on various issues.

NIMASC is keen to explore how to best use the technology available to liaise with NIMASC members, however unless these sites were polulated with relevant content their use will become counter productive. The BMA communities was considered a more interactive form of communication and could be used to post documents that NIMASC members would find useful.

Conference of Medical Academic Representatives (COMAR)
The chair reported on COMAR which he had attended with George Hynds on 15 May in BMA London. NIMASC had submitted 2 motions to this conference.

The chair felt the overall conference process was worthwhile and therefore it was important that NIMASC consider what motions could be submitted for the next conference at each of its forthcoming meetings.

Academic Seminar/Open Evening
NIMASC has been considering different methods to try and increase the profile of NIMASC and it has been proposed that it would be worthwhile holding an open evening/seminar on “the implications of new pension” and invite Andy Blake, Head of BMA Pensions to present at this event.
Another proposal was to follow this event up with a “Careers symposium” focusing on clinical academic career paths and this could be advertised/promoted at the pensions event.

**Dates of Next Meetings**
These have not yet been agreed.